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News

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Contact: Justine Adelizzi
Tel: (202) 366-4570

U.S. Department of Transportation Releases “Faces of Distracted Driving” Public Service Announcement *Campaign Has Already Reached 100,000 Viewers Nationwide*

WASHINGTON – U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood today released a new public service announcement (PSA) promoting the U.S. Department of Transportation’s “Faces of Distracted Driving” series, which has been viewed over 100,000 times since its launch in November 2010.

Watch: “Faces of Distracted Driving: Get the Message”
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjmlv1rbGKE>

The 30-second PSA, “Get the Message,” features clips from people from across the country who lost loved ones in distracted driving crashes and have spoken out through the U.S. Department of Transportation’s “Faces of Distracted Driving” campaign. “Get the Message” is available for download on www.distraction.gov.

“I thank all of the families of distracted driving victims who have bravely chosen to share their stories of loss with the world,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. “The response to their heartbreaking stories has been overwhelming and their efforts to build public awareness are helping to save lives. I urge everyone to watch our ‘Faces of Distracted Driving’ series at distraction.gov and to remember: talking or texting while driving is not worth the risk.”

The U.S. Department of Transportation’s “Faces of Distracted Driving” video series shines a light on the tragic consequences of texting and cell phone use while driving. In 2009, nearly 5,500 people died and half a million were injured in accidents involving a distracted driver.

WATCH: “Faces of Distracted Driving” – www.distraction.gov/faces

The U.S. Department of Transportation is encouraging anyone who would like to share their distracted driving experiences to post videos on YouTube and email the links to: faces@distraction.gov.

Individuals featured in the series thus far include:

Bob & Eilene Okerblom – Santa Maria, California

WATCH: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rr7TfwtO17I>

On July 25, 2009, 19-year-old Eric Okerblom was killed when his bike was struck by a truck traveling at 60 miles per hour. Cell phone records indicate that the driver was texting just prior to the collision. Since their son's death, Bob and Eilene Okerblom have become advocates against distracted driving, and Bob is currently biking cross-country to raise awareness.

Loren Vaillancourt – Huron, South Dakota

WATCH: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdQDTmKY0vY>

On May 20, 2009, 21-year-old Kelson Vaillancourt was riding with a co-worker to a job site when the driver became distracted and failed to yield at a stop sign. He drove into oncoming traffic, and their vehicle was struck by a tractor-trailer. Kelson died the next day. To honor her brother's memory, Loren Vaillancourt has been using her visibility as Miss South Dakota 2010 to speak with schools and organizations throughout her state about the dangers of distracted driving.

Joel & Dianne Feldman – Springfield, Pennsylvania

WATCH: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPrZCCjrFLs>

On July 17, 2009, 21-year-old Casey Feldman was struck and killed by a distracted driver as she crossed the street in Ocean City, New Jersey. To honor her memory, Casey's family and friends produced their own video for the U.S. Department of Transportation's "Faces of Distracted Driving" series.

Johnny Mac & Jeanne Brown – Wellman, Texas

WATCH: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDKOiMSkLxY>

On November 10, 2009, 17-year-old Alex Brown was killed when she crashed her truck on a rural road while she was on her way to school. She was texting at the time of the crash. To honor Alex's memory, her family – Jeanne, Johnny Mac, and 12-year-old Katrina – formed an anti-distracted driving advocacy group, the Remember Alex Brown Foundation.

Emily Reynolds – Omaha, Nebraska

WATCH: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aG79X-hYJ_E

On May 30, 2007, 16-year-old Cady Reynolds was driving her best friend home from a movie near Omaha, Nebraska, when another teen driver – who was severely distracted behind the wheel – ran a red light and slammed into her car at 50 miles per hour. Cady was rushed to the hospital with critical injuries and died the next day. Emily Reynolds, Cady's 17-year-old sister, is now an advocate against distracted driving and is an active member of NOYS, the National Organizations for Youth Safety.

Judy Teater – Spring Lake, Michigan

WATCH: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6iCrZ4AIpw>

On January 19, 2004, Judy Teater and her 12-year-old son Joe were driving to an after school activity when a young woman behind the wheel of a Hummer and talking on her cell phone ran a red light and slammed into their vehicle. Joe died the next day from his injuries. Judy Teater is a founding board member of FocusDriven, the first national nonprofit organization devoted specifically to raising awareness about the dangers of distracted driving.

Amos Johnson – Asheville, North Carolina

WATCH: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcRTwKminbQ>

On May 10, 2010, 16-year-old Ashley Johnson was killed when she lost control of her vehicle, crossed the center line, and hit a pickup truck head-on. Although her father had warned her against cell phone use behind the wheel, she was texting at the time of the crash. Amos Johnson, Ashley's father, now speaks to local teens about the dangers of distracted driving.

Laurie Hevier – St. Paul, Minnesota

WATCH: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_pHBWyUQxx4

On April 15, 2009, 58-year-old Julie Davis set off for a hike with her best friend in Rudolph, Wisconsin. As they were walking beside the road, a 19-year-old driving at 70 miles per hour struck Julie from behind, killing her instantly. Crash reconstruction reports showed the driver could not have been looking at the road for 8.75 seconds. She was cited for inattentive driving and fined \$173.40. Laurie Hevier, Julie's daughter, is now an advocate against distracted driving.

Elissa Schee – St. Augustine, Florida

WATCH: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_vB22cW1ZMY

On September 23, 2008, 13-year-old Margay Schee was riding home from school when a semi-truck slammed into the back of her school bus near Citra, Florida. She was killed when rescuers were unable to get her out of the burning wreckage. The truck driver was talking on his cell phone at the time of crash and said he never saw the bus. Margay's mother, Elissa Schee, is a founding board member of FocusDriven, the first national nonprofit organization devoted specifically to raising awareness about the dangers of distracted driving.

To learn more about USDOT's efforts to stop distracted driving, please visit www.distraction.gov.

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